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AUTHOR Booth, Walter S.
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ABSTRACT

General and specific information is offered on integrating community policing and other management philosophies into an organization's selection and promotional testing systems. The concept of community policing is not necessarily a new one for many police organizations, but integrating it fully requires bringing internal support structures into line with the concept. The two most important support structures are the selection and promotional testing processes and personnel evaluation processes. While it is possible to incorporate community policing themes and concepts into written tests and interviews, the major focus of this presentation is the incorporation of community policing into assessment centers. A way to begin is to examine both the organization and the job to be sure that the developed test is appropriate. Job complexity and the level of integration of community policing should be considered in designing role play or other job simulations such as In Basket exercises. In developing any selection or promotional tests, it is essential to internalize the philosophies of the organization first. An article, "Integrating COP into Selection and Promotional Systems," by Walter S. Booth from "The Police Chief," March 1995 is attached. (SLD)

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Walter S. Booth, Ph. D.

ED 393 925

INTEGRATING COMMUNITY POLICING INTO POLICE SELECTION AND PROMOTIONAL TESTING SYSTEMS

IPMA - Assessment Council Conference

June 25 - 29, 1995

New Orleans, Louisiana

This presentation is intended to offer both general and specific information on integrating community policing as well as other management philosophies into an organization's selection and promotional testing systems. In addition to the information contained in this presentation, I have attached to this document an article which I recently published in Police Chief magazine on this topic.

Let me begin by first talking about some of the general issues which need to be considered when an organization begins the process of introducing a new philosophy. It should be noted that this new philosophy could be community policing, total quality management, a new focus on customer service, or any new management philosophy with its concomitant new values, directions, and goals.

In addition, as many of you have become aware, the concept of community policing is not necessarily a new philosophy for many police organizations. Indeed, for many police departments, the introduction of community policing represents a reaffirmation of what a department has always been doing. For many communities the "change" to community policing is principally a means of merging modern methods and techniques with some traditional values. An example might be the technique of offering apartment complex managers information about prospective renters as part of a department's traditional emphasis on customer service.

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I consult with law enforcement organizations across the United States, and I would estimate that no less that four out of five are turning to, or have turned to, the ideals expressed in the community policing philosophy. It is one of my great pleasures to observe organizations in all stages of bringing the community policing philosophy into their communities and organizations. Some have just begun the process, and are in the initial steps of attempting to "sell" the concept to the public, to community leaders, and to members of their own organization.

Other organizations have gotten past these initial hurdles, and are testing ideas for implementing this new concept into various aspects of their organizations. I have, for example, seen police departments examining ways in which the community policing philosophy can be incorporated into aspects of their organization which have traditionally not been touched by community policing, such as the investigation or detective divisions.

And still other police organizations are far along in the process of integrating community oriented policing. Many of these organizations, for example, are going through a rigorous process of re-evaluating their successes and failures over the past five to ten years following the introduction of this philosophy.

I would like to point out what I consider to be one of the most fundamental and wide-spread mistakes which I see occurring as law enforcement organizations undertake this transition to community policing. The effect of this error is, at the very least, to significantly delay the transitioning process, and may well lead to a department failing in its mission.

The initial process for most organizations as they attempt to transition to community policing is to "sell" the concept. They typically concentrate on two audiences. First are the civic and political leaders in the community. Usually, this is not too great of a challenge, at least until additional money is requested!

But organizations should not become too complacent about the ease of this initial effort to sell the concept to the public. As American society becomes less tolerant of what it perceives as a justice system which is soft on crime, those organizations attempting to sell community policing will inevitably be faced with the pressures to make more arrests, and to be evaluated using more traditional crime statistics.

While most practitioners of community policing know that community policing is not "soft of crime", many in the community may not understand this. Furthermore, departments may have some difficulty in conveying the standards by which they should be judged, which may go well beyond the traditional crime statistics favored by the news media and much of the public.

The second audience for a department's sales pitch for community policing is the members of the organization itself. Here is where the most significant and most consistent errors are being made. Many departments will develop new mission statements, slogans, values, and goals. They will offer training classes to their members on this new philosophy. A few may even reinforce the philosophy by openly rewarding those in the department who demonstrate application of the philosophy in their daily work activities.

And yet, I would argue that the vast majority of organizations experience some resistance or some problems getting their organizations working in a cohesive manner toward the objectives of the philosophy. Why?

Very simply, these organizations have not brought their internal support structures in line with the new philosophy. The two most important support structures are the selection and promotional testing processes, and the personnel performance evaluation processes. There is not sufficient time in this presentation to discuss integrating community policing into an organization's performance evaluation systems. Nonetheless, I feel that doing so is absolutely essential for the successful transition to community policing, so I want to emphasize that it is important for an organization to make this effort.

It seems so intuitively obvious that it is surprising to me that more organizations do not take aggressive steps to get their performance evaluation system in line with their department's philosophy and objectives when they begin transitioning to community policing. If an organization has not done this, then they will be faced with a myriad of problems.

For example, officers who are the least bit hesitant about accepting community policing can easily point to the fact that they are not being evaluated by criteria which is consistent with the directives of the department. They can use this apparent hypocrisy to criticize the overall effort and to downplay its implementation. Even supervisors who sincerely believe in the philosophy will have a difficult time convincing their subordinates if they are tied to measuring performance by traditional criteria which do not take into consideration important aspects of community policing.

While this presentation only allows me an opportunity to note this important issue, I want to make certain that all of you recognize that with this support system missing, an organization has a very tough battle transitioning to community policing, or any new philosophy. I am currently finishing an article on the topic of integrating community policing into an organization's performance evaluation system, and will be pleased to send you a copy upon completion. My address and telephone number is located on the first and last page of this document.

An earlier presentation today addressed integrating community policing into an organization's initial hiring processes. It is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that the people who are being tested for entry level positions in the policing profession today are in many ways different than those who were tested in 1950. And yet, the testing methods have not significantly changed since that time.

During World War II, psychologists were asked for a method to test and classify large numbers of personnel for the armed services. The tests had to be quick, inexpensive, and relatively accurate. Psychologists used written test instruments for the most part, and to a lesser but nonetheless significant degree, also interviews.

Written tests did a commendable job during World War II. They proved to be relatively inexpensive and efficient for large numbers of people, and there was acceptable evidence of validity. That is to say, the tests were reasonably accurate in predicting job performance. After the war, business and industry decided to also use this methodology for their entry level selection and classification of personnel.

But keep in mind the individuals to whom the tests were being administered during World War II. The vast majority of people being tested were white males. So, it was found that written tests, and to a lesser degree interviews, demonstrated acceptable levels of accuracy in predicting job performance - for white males.

During the 1960's and 1970's, ethnic minorities and women came into the workforce in very significant numbers. It was found that written tests tended to demonstrate lower validity in predicting their job performance, and also presented other concerns such as the seemingly ubiquitous problem of adverse impact.

Written tests were also found to have other limitations. While they are generally good at measuring job knowledge which is particularly important for, say, certification, they tend to be much less effective at measuring many of the qualities which are important for success as a police officer today such as problem solving, negotiation, or interpersonal skills.

Interestingly enough, also during World War II, another technique was developed for the selection and classification of personnel for a very specific job - that of spy. This methodology was called the assessment center. I feel certain that you have some knowledge of this methodology, so I won't go into detail about it. However, I firmly believe that it is this second methodology which allows police departments to more fully integrate community policing into their promotional systems than can otherwise be accomplished by written tests, interviews, or similar traditional methods.

While it is possible to incorporate community policing themes and concepts in written tests, and to a somewhat greater degree in interviews, the major focus of this presentation will be in incorporating community policing into assessment centers. Some of the information I provide, however, can certainly be modified for use in these and other more traditional testing methods.

One way to begin this process is to examine both the organization and the job. This, of course, is essential to the development of any valid testing procedure. Unfortunately, many practitioners still tend to concentrate almost solely on examining the job rather than the organization in which that job exists. In my opinion, this is a major mistake.

The job of Police Sergeant, for example, tends to be a first line supervisory position in almost every police department. I have reviewed job descriptions for Police Sergeant in hundreds of organizations both large and small, and I cannot think of a single major difference between any of these job descriptions. But there are obvious differences between the jobs in these organizations!

How can this exist? The difference is that each organization provides certain parameters within which jobs exist. While a Police Sergeant is a first line supervisor which requires the evaluation of subordinates, providing direction to subordinates, decision making, problem solving, and so forth, how these activities are implemented depend heavily on the shape, goals, direction, and values of the organization. Indeed, it is because a job reflects the philosophy of an organization that we are able to incorporate community policing into promotional processes.

We have worked with some police organizations that are very militaristic and with others that have very informal organizational structures and internal relationships. Some police organizations allow decision making to be pushed to the lowest levels of their organizations, while others prohibit much in the way of independent judgment. Some organizations have their Sergeants interact with community groups while others assign higher level personnel to these functions. Whereas decision making, problem solving, and similar skills are required in Sergeants in all of these organizations, how they are applied vary significantly.

So, in addition to examining the job for which the test is to be designed, I believe that considerable thought needs to be given to the organization in which that job exists. I will discuss an example which uses only one aspect of community policing (i.e., the length of time an organization has been involved in community policing or to put it another way, the degree to which it has been incorporated into the organization). But it is important to keep in mind that there are many other aspects of an organization's community policing efforts that need to be considered when developing a promotional test.

Examples of these other considerations include such aspects as (1) whether community policing is a distinct part of the organization (e.g., a separate organizational unit) or whether it is integrated into most or all of the organizational structure, (2) the sophistication and acceptance of the department and the community, (3) involvement of other city departments, and so forth.

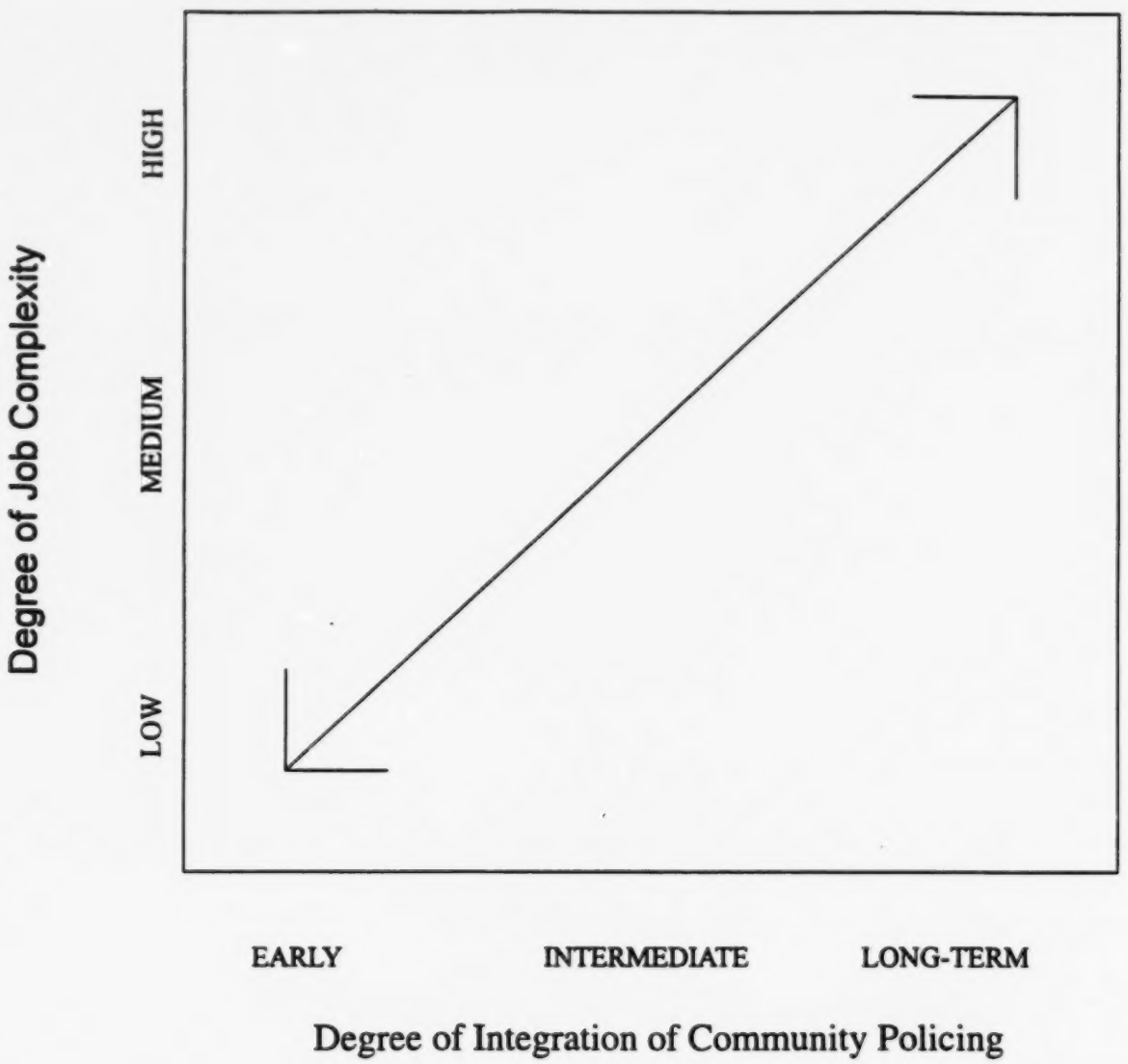
For our purposes, we will look at the issue along two dimensions. One is the level of job complexity (from entry level police officer to police chief), and the other is the level of integration of the philosophy. To operationalize level of integration, I have essentially defined it as the length of time that an organization has been involved in community policing. While I recognize that the length of time that an organization has been involved in community policing is a relatively crude measure of its integration into that organization, it does provide us with a workable format.

Consider the chart on the following page. Along the vertical axis is the complexity of the job, ranging from lower level positions such as police officer to mid-level positions such as Lieutenant or Captain, to higher level positions such as Police Chief.

Along the horizontal axis is the level of integration of the philosophy into the organization. We have this measured from early through intermediate, to long-term. In other words, an organization which is early in the process is just beginning to explore how community policing can be implemented, while long-term would indicate an organization that has, perhaps, moved into its tenth year of involvement with community policing and has had multiple opportunities to evaluate its successes and failures.

Let us assume that you wish to conduct a promotional assessment center for a job such as Police Sergeant which is relatively low on the complexity axis (I am not implying that this job is not complex, but rather, that in comparison to other jobs along the axis it may require dealing with less complex issues). One organization with this position has only just begun implementing community policing while a second organization has been involved with it for many years.

Let's look at how a role play exercise for a Sergeant's position might differ across these two organizations. In the first organization which is just beginning its transition, a Sergeant might be required to meet with a subordinate who is vocally resistant to the community policing concept. This subordinate does not care for change, and is outwardly opposed to spending his time doing "social work" rather than "true law enforcement work".


Degree of Job Complexity
HIGH
MEDIUM
LOW
EARLY
INTERMEDIATE
LONG-TERM
Degree of Integration of Community Policing

We have used this exercise several times, and it has proven very revealing in terms of the degree to which it reveals candidates' true acceptance of this philosophy (as well as their understanding of it). As candidates work at convincing their subordinate of the benefits of community policing, the assessors get the opportunity to judge the degree to which the candidates understand and believe in the philosophy.

Compare the previously described Role Play exercise with one designed for a Sergeant in another organization in which the community policing philosophy has been well accepted. In this latter organization, a Sergeant might have another problem - that of defining limits for subordinates.

As an example of a Role Play exercise, you might have an officer who has taken upon herself to organize a neighborhood association to fight crime. This neighborhood association has a park which needs new lights and safer playground equipment. Suppose that this officer has become so involved with this neighborhood organization that she has lost her perspective. This officer appears before the city council on behalf of the neighborhood association appealing for money to be spent on street lights and park equipment, threatening dire consequences in terms of rapes and robberies if money is not forthcoming. The city council does not appreciate this officer showing up to a city council meeting in uniform and "putting pressure on them", and they complain to the Chief.

The supervisor of this officer is contacted and the candidate who is placed in the role of this officer's supervisor is expected to address the subordinate. We have used this both as a concept in an In Basket exercise as well as in a Role Play exercise.

Here you can see two Role Play exercises for the same job of Sergeant, and even many of the same skills are being examined in both exercises. The difference is the degree to which the exercise reflects the level of integration of the philosophy in the department. It is more than the mere realism of the exercise, although I believe that such realism significantly helps in candidate acceptance of the process as well as the face validity of the test.

By designing an exercise which reflects the place where a department is in terms of its transition to community policing, you enhance the fidelity of the testing instrument. In addition, the test is obviously one which has been designed specifically for your organization rather than for a generic organization which is at a different place in terms of its involvement with community policing.

Let's consider another exercise, such as an Interview exercise. For many positions, we find it interesting to present an alternative view or, to put it another way, to play the devil's advocate. For example, a candidate for a police Sergeant position in an organization in which community policing is still in its early stages of being sold might be asked the following question:

> "Some people might argue that the police profession has lost its focus. Police officers are now counseling children, working on neighborhood planning issues, and performing other functions which they were not originally hired to perform, nor are they as good at as other aspects of society. Furthermore, all indications are that crime is increasing. Would you agree or disagree with the proposition that the law enforcement profession has lost focus on its principle mission? Please explain your answer."

Let us provide you with a similar example. In this situation, however, we have a higher level position but one which is in an organization at the approximate stage as that cited above. Here again, we play the devil's advocate and present a reasonably solid argument against community policing. This question was used for a Police Chief selection procedure which we conducted in a western state:

> "Out here in the west, citizens pride themselves on their fierce independence. They typically handle problems within the family, church, or other small social structures, and strongly resist government involvement in their matters. Does community policing really fit in this environment? Please explain your answer."

There are other aspects of an organization which can and should be incorporated into the situations which are given to candidates. For example, we have asked the following questions for many different job levels:

> "This city has a large number of low income citizens and renters. These people tend to move frequently from one residence to another. What problems does this present for your organization as it attempts to implement community policing, and what solutions can you offer to these problems?"

We recently worked with a client which had large numbers of migrant workers. We asked the following question of candidates for a Sergeant position in this community:

> "This city has a significant number of migrant workers and even illegal aliens, persons who language and culture are closer to those of Mexico than America. Many of these people do not feel a part of the larger community. Furthermore, many of these people often see the government as a hostile entity rather than something which is available to assist them and to provide needed services. What responsibility do you see for yourself as a Sergeant in addressing this concern, and what solutions can you offer?"

The In Basket exercise is one of my favorite exercises. It is important to note, however, that the In Basket exercises I develop tend to differ significantly from those you may have seen or encountered elsewhere. First of all, our In Basket exercises are not simply a series of conflicting meetings which require the candidate to decide which to attend and which to delegate. Instead, we develop exercises which present a variety of real-life conflicts which have significant impacts.

Furthermore, I believe that it is critically important for candidates to go before the assessors to explain the actions they propose for the various problems encountered in this exercise. This allows for a dialogue between assessors and candidates which produces a richness in the process that cannot otherwise be obtained. Let me provide you with some examples.

While community policing is very appealing, it also has its risks. Having officers involved with public groups allows for considerable opportunities for the line between police activities and political agendas to blur. We have explored this issue in a variety of ways in the In Basket exercise.

Suppose, for example, that you are a candidate for Police Chief (High Level of Job Complexity) and the organization has been involved in community policing for many years (High Level of Integration). This is where the political risks and consequences are most high.

You encounter two documents in your In Basket exercise. The first document is a letter from the school board which reminds you that they pay for half the salary of your D.A.R.E. officer. They discover that this officer is openly gay. The school board is uncomfortable about this, and several parents have voiced complaints that this officer has spoken openly about his homosexual lifestyle. The school board wants another officer to function as the D.A.R.E. instructor and threatens to drop their support of the program unless another officer is assigned.

The second In Basket document is a memorandum from the officer who states that he has never "promoted" his gay lifestyle, but if the teens ask him, he is honest and does not hide the fact that he is gay. He has been recognized in the past for his innovations as a D.A.R.E. officer, and strongly objects to any suggestions of being re-assigned or removed from his activities in the D.A.R.E. program.

Most candidates are sophisticated enough to recognize that discrimination based upon sexual preference is generally not acceptable. It probably violates the values of the organization, if not local or state laws. In some respects, it is rather easy for a candidate to "take the high road" and to indicate that they would not tolerate this action by the school board. Here is where the assessors begin their questioning of the candidate.

With the school board threatening to halt the program if this officer continues, would the candidate be willing to risk the drug abuse resistance education of hundreds of youth in order to stand up for the rights of this single officer? Another area which the assessors would explore is the candidates' opinions regarding the extent to which the police department's customers have a say in who provides service to them?

Indeed, we have explored this latter issue in a variety of ways in our In Basket exercises. Suppose, for example, that a neighborhood association was created which covered both a business area and a residential neighborhood. Suppose further that the businesses are predominantly owned by Whites while the residential area is predominantly made up of African-Americans. The businesses and the residents conflict on so many issues that they decide to form their own associations.

One of these new associations asks that the officer who had been the liaison officer for the combined association no longer serve in that capacity for their new organization. They couch their arguments in terms of conflicting needs of the two organizations, in terms of too close of a relationship between the officer and the individuals within the other organization, or any of a number of other issues. But underlying it all is the issue of race. We can make the officer African-American or White, whichever creates the conflict for this scenario.

Like the previous conflict dealing with the D.A.R.E. officer, candidates may be tempted to take the socially desirable path which suggests that race cannot be a criteria for assignment to duties or job tasks. But these neighborhood organizations could easily schedule their meetings at the same time such that a single officer could not attend both, or they could do other things which might tie a Police Chief's hands. And, there is the additional question of the degree to which organizational entities have a say in the service that is provided to them.

Police departments are often eager in creating and working with neighborhood associations. But as the community policing philosophy matures, many departments are going to be confronted with creatures which they have created but cannot control. How they handle these situations can be the fodder for interesting, challenging, and realistic assessment centers.

So far we have examined various levels of job complexity, from first line supervisor to department director. We have also examined the degree to which an organization has integrated a new philosophy. I would like to remind the audience that the methodologies I have described can be applied to any new philosophy that an organization is attempting to incorporate.

The key is to examine not only the job, but the various aspects of the organization which will affect that job. As a modest example of this, I should note that one of our clients is a very progressive fire department which is nationally recognized for its S.O.S. program. S.O.S. stands for "Seeking Opportunities to Serve", and the philosophy of the department emphasizes that its members need to look for opportunities to provide service to the community. If citizens need a flat tire fixed, a flooded basement pumped out, or a street banner hung, they only have to call the fire department, and they know that their needs will be addressed.

This philosophy, like community policing, presents numerous opportunities for problems to emerge. It requires some imagination, as well as a few other factors to be discussed in a moment, in order to incorporate these issues into the promotional testing process.

We designed the following Role Play exercise for this department. The position being tested was Battalion Chief. The candidate for this position receives a call from the Fire Chief who informs him that, over the weekend, the following events occurred.

The City Manager was hosting a number of dignitaries from a sister city. The City Manager was having a barbecue dinner for these dignitaries and, as it turns out, he had purchased a barbecue from a fire fighter who was a welder and who had a side business of turning old steel drums into barbecues.

When the City Manager could not get the barbecue to light, he became frustrated and asked his assistant to call the station where this fire fighter worked in order to get the fire fighter to come over and fix the barbecue. The Captain at the station greatly disliked the City Manager who had cut the department's budget and delayed raises. When the City Manager's assistant asked for this fire fighter, the Captain cited department policy which prohibits fire fighters from working on their off-duty businesses while on duty.

When the City Manager found out why the fire fighter had not shown up to help him, resulting in embarrassment to the city and the City Manager, he was furious. The next day he called the Fire Chief and "expressed his displeasure in no uncertain terms". The Fire Chief called the Battalion Chief (i.e., the candidate), and is also furious. He tells the Battalion Chief to "set this Captain straight".

The candidate is therefore placed in the unenviable position of having to deal with a recalcitrant Captain who forbade a fire fighter from assisting the City Manager in what could well be considered a city function, because he disliked the City Manager. However, the Captain can easily hide behind the protocols and procedures of the department.

As the candidates attempted various strategies to deal with the sarcastic and recalcitrant role player, the actor had a number of classic lines such as the following: "So, if the City Manager needed bartenders for his affair, would you expect me to send a fire fighter to serve drinks?". In this situation, the assessors were looking for candidates who could traverse the politically delicate waters, couch the issue in terms of the basic philosophy of the department (S.O.S.), and handle the belligerent subordinate.

The basic model I have been describing which requires an analysis of the organization as well as the job can be used for assessing candidates in almost any organization and any job. We have been successful in assessing positions from entry level to chief operating officers. We have worked with public sector and private sector organizations, both large and small.

Obviously, imagination and creativity are important in designing such exercises. On the other hand, I have seen very creative people design exercises which, well simply, just did not work as planned. Sometimes the problem became too complex. More often, the situation was so obvious that the solution was simple and obvious. As a result, all of the candidates responded in the same way, and there were no meaningful differences upon which judgments could take place.

Typically, we look to explore candidates' value systems, and examine how those value systems coincide with the values of the organization. These are treacherous waters. You want to be able to assess the candidates' true self in environments in which they know they are being evaluated.

As a result, you need to set up situations which do not necessarily have clear cut answers. This often troubles test designers and clients alike. "How do you know whether or not a candidate has correctly answered a question or dealt with a problem?", we are frequently asked. Surprisingly perhaps, it becomes quite obvious when a candidate has appropriately analyzed a problem and developed solutions to that problem. But I suppose that you will not take this on faith alone.

All of our situations are carefully analyzed, and alternative solutions are examined. Perhaps most importantly is not the final solution for a specific problem we present but rather, the thinking process that is used in coming to that solution. Assessors look for a rational process that considers the consequences to the decisions that are made. They look for candidates who not only understand the consequences of decisions but who incorporate the values of the organization in making those decisions such as participative decision making, personal dignity, customer service, or whatever the organization's values might be.

Perhaps the best advice that can be offered in terms of designing selection or promotional systems which reflect an organization's philosophy is for the test developer to internalize that philosophy before developing the test. Consider the philosophy of the organization, its values and goals. Consider how this philosophy is reflected in the activities of the organization. Consider the issues which create conflict and problems for positions within the organization. You should be limited only by your imagination.

Sadly, I am limited by time in this presentation. If you would like more information on incorporating new philosophies such as Community Policing or other new management philosophies into your promotional processes or personnel evaluation systems, please contact:

Dr. Walter S. Booth
12689 Antelope Trail
Parker, Colorado 80134
(303) 840-3346

Integrating COP into Selection and Promotional Systems

By Walter S. Booth, Ph.D., Booth Research Group, Aurora, Colorado

When police departments decide to implement community policing (or similar policing philosophies), they typically line up support from their city manager and/or city council. They get support from the community. They develop a mission statement and implementation plan. They may assign a person to coordinate the implementation. They hold meetings with their personnel. They offer training classes.

So why are the personnel within these organizations frequently very slow to accept the advent of community policing?

There are a variety of explanations. Natural resistance to change is certainly one of them, and there may also be some bitterness from officers who believe they have not been recognized for doing what they regard as community policing all along. Perhaps the line officers are all for it, but their supervisors remain stuck in more traditional enforcement models.

If many of the personnel in your organization are not moving as rapidly toward community policing as you believe they should be, it is probably due to all three of the above reasons (as well as a few more).

The problem is that the more fundamental systems within the organization (i.e., those that are most likely to affect their personnel, such as selection and promotional systems, and performance evaluation systems) have not been adapted for use in a community policing environment.

Most selection/promotion tests used by police departments include an interview, a written test, an assessment center or some combination of the three. This article discusses each of these techniques and demonstrates how community policing can be integrated into each.

Interviews

The most common method for selection and promotion, the interview is also the least reliable and valid method. Nonetheless, it can be an effective tool when used in conjunction with other methods, and the reliability and validity of the interviews conducted by most organizations can be improved by designing them to reflect the jurisdiction's philosophy, direction, issues and concerns.

Far too many interviews attempt to explore a candidate's understanding of community policing by simply asking him to "define it" or "explain it." This typically results in well-practiced answers that reveal very little about the candidate's knowledge or experience. It is not unlike the traditional interview question in which candidates are asked to describe their "management style," which finds 99 percent of the candidates responding with: "I'm a participative manager." The intent of such a question should be to examine whether a candidate knows when to be a participative manager and when to rely on other managerial techniques.

If an interview consists only of generic or standard questions, the answers that will be given will likely be generic, well-rehearsed and remarkably uninformative.

The best interview questions focus on three general areas: arguments and ideas that require analysis by the candidate, hypothetical situations and scenarios that must be handled by the candidate, and the candidate's past experiences.

The first type of question is exemplified by the following query, which was posed to candidates for the position of chief of police in a municipality in Wyoming:

> *The people in this city retain many of the traditional values of the American West, including a fierce independence, a general mistrust of government and the strong belief that problems should be handled within the family unit or perhaps the church, but certainly not by representatives of the government. Given these strong values, it would seem that community policing is not an appropriate philosophy for police departments in this region. What do you think?*

The interviewers were looking for a variety of elements in the candidates' answers. For example, they were looking to see if the candidates were willing to take a stand, and whether or not they were willing to defend their position when questioned further. The interviewers were also looking for how the candidates weighed the various considerations, whether or not they had given thought to these kinds of issues, and whether or not they knew enough about community policing to adapt it to this environment.

In another community, whose police force had relatively few African-American officers, despite the fact that its population was predominantly African-American, the following question was developed in an effort to examine the candidates' analytical processes.

> *A significant component of community policing is having officers get to know the residents of a particular neighborhood and establish a trust relationship. Minority officers tend to get assigned to minority neighborhoods because it is presumed they will be more likely to understand the concerns and needs of the citizens in that neighborhood, and will also be more likely to establish a trust relationship with those citizens. Do you see this as a good or bad practice, and why?*

There are, of course, legitimate arguments on both sides of this issue. The bottom line, however, is that the better candidates were those who understood community policing and had given thought to these types of issues, which affected their community and the position for which they were testing. The better candidates were able to analyze the problems and articulate well-reasoned responses.

The best scenario-based questions present situations in which a variety of problem-solving tactics could be applied. Consider the following question, asked of candidates applying for a mid-level position in a municipal police department:

Protect your future

Continuing professional education is a very real necessity for law enforcement officers wanting to advance their careers, but as budgets continue to tighten, you want training that is affordable and involves only top quality instructors. Penn State has a lineup of education programs for you.

For more than 25 years, Penn State has provided professional development opportunities to law enforcement professionals nationwide.

Programs are developed by Penn State's Institute for Continuing Justice Education and Research, and instruction is provided by faculty members in the Department of Administration of Justice. Planned for 1995 include:

Police Executive Development Institute (POLEX)
May 1–12
Advanced POLEX, May 12–26

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This city has a large number of renters who live within the city limits. Many of these renters frequently move from one residence to another and may not even stay in the city for a significant period of time. What problems do they present for a police bureau that is attempting to implement community policing, and what solutions can you offer to these problems?

While this question is similar to the first two in that it requires logical thinking and analysis, it also allows the interviewers an opportunity to evaluate the candidates' proposed solutions. Again, the candidate who has given thought to the kinds of problems he is likely to face on the job is much more likely to be able to answer this question with confidence and sound reasoning.

The third type of interview question asks candidates to describe an experience from their past. Sometimes, they are simply asked to describe a time when they took a particular action (e.g., "Tell us about a time when you identified a performance weakness in a subordinate and developed a plan to improve that employee's performance"). A better strategy, however, is to provide a format for this response, asking candidates to discuss some work or project they have performed by describing the situation that led to the work or project, the actions they (or others) had taken, the results of those actions, and what they and others learned from the experience.

As noted earlier, traditional interviews are most valuable when used in conjunction with other selection techniques. For example, a police chief might wish to interview candidates who had successfully completed an assessment center. If the assessment center was properly conducted, the chief should have a report that details the strengths and weaknesses of the individual candidates as seen by the assessors. The chief might also review the candidates' performance histories, and speak to the subordinates' supervisors and co-workers prior to conducting the interviews.

Of course, interviews are critical for entry-level selection. With the high cost of officer selection and training, coupled with the high liability associated with these personnel, it is vital that the very best candidates be identified. This process is often made more complex by the sheer volume of applicants for many positions, which limits the amount of time that can be spent interviewing individual candidates. Add to this concerns over affirmative action, reliability across different interviewers, legal restrictions on the questions that can be asked, and so forth, and the process can seem overwhelming. Perhaps most confounding is the fact that people's motivations and interests tend to evolve over time. A 23-year-old single

Regardless of the technique used, the following suggestions will enhance any department's selection/promotional systems.

Many departments fail to realize that a test—particularly a promotional test—is a tremendous opportunity to reinforce their organizational values and driving philosophy. A candidate orientation held prior to any promotional examination is a good opportunity to convey information about the best way to prepare. Ideally, candidates should prepare not for the assessment center but for the position they are seeking.

First, candidates should conduct a careful review of their own strengths and weaknesses. It is helpful to speak with their supervisors and peers, and to review previous performance evaluations. If they are willing to accept criticism with an open mind, they are likely to discover how to use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses.

Second, candidates should speak with people who are currently doing the job, finding out as much as they can about the kinds of problems faced by the incumbents on a daily basis. Then, they need to decide how they might handle those problems.

Third, candidates should speak to the leaders of the organization to find out what issues are affecting the department, the direction in which the department is headed and so forth. In large organizations, the chief often holds a "state-of-the-department" address for all candidates. This gives the chief an opportunity to convey his thoughts about the issues facing the department, and allows the candidates a forum in which to voice their questions about those issues. Other chiefs prefer to see which candidates are sufficiently motivated to seek them out and ask for their ideas.

When candidates are encouraged to undergo this kind of preparation prior to a test, the effect on the department can be profound. Supervisors have the opportunity to provide meaningful feedback to candidates in an environment that is more conducive to personal development than the formal, year-end evaluation. Furthermore, the organization's leaders are given another opportunity to present their ideas on its direction, philosophy and goals.

Communication in organizations often dramatically increases just prior to a promotional examination. There is an almost palpable feeling as the organization buzzes with talk about the issues facing the department and how those issues will affect various positions. Obviously, a promotional testing process can provide a wonderful opportunity to reinforce, remind and reinvigorate the organization.

officer may have vastly different interests and motivations than he will have as a 45-year-old veteran supporting a family.

The entry-level selection interview should focus on many of the same attributes that promotional tests examine, with the goal of determining whether or not the candidates have given sufficient thought to the types of problems they are likely to encounter, and whether or not they have a thought process and value system that will guide them to a correct response even in the absence of job-specific knowledge.

One might, for example, ask an entry-level candidate how he would propose to resolve a problem such as the following:

> *Suppose that you are a patrol officer and find that at least once or twice per shift you are called to a convenience store by the owner. The owner is upset because teens are loitering outside his store after school. What would you do?*

This question examines whether or not the candidate is inclined to focus solely on enforcement as a solution, is likely to seek alternatives, relies on others to solve the problem or is capable of evaluating various resources and options.

An interview can be an excellent opportunity to observe candidates handling

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stress, analyzing realistic problems, using logical reasoning and interacting with others. But it must be well designed in order to reflect the organization's philosophy, values and goals. Furthermore, it should be used in connection with other testing instruments in order to enhance its value and to ensure that the selection meets the desired criteria.

Written Tests

Written tests—excellent tools for examining candidates' basic knowledge level—are often used as one element in a comprehensive testing process. For promotional purposes, written tests are frequently used as the first "hurdle" in the process, with the highest scorers going on to an assessment center and interview. At the entry level, the written test is often used to select who may continue in the process to the interview, medical exam, background check, psychological testing or other more costly elements.

Because most organizations include their protocols and procedures as part of the material from which the test items will be drawn, it is important that these materials reflect the organization's emphasis on community policing.

When a law enforcement organization is emphasizing modern managerial approaches—such as community policing or total quality management—there is considerable benefit in going beyond the traditional police texts.

Published articles can be valuable source material for written tests, and when they are made available for the candidates to study, the test becomes an opportunity to raise the level of knowledge of many in the organization.

When a law enforcement organization is emphasizing modern managerial approaches—such as community policing, total quality management, etc.—there is considerable benefit in going beyond the traditional police texts. A textbook that is primarily devoted to management theory and practices but does not specifically address police management may be more valuable than a police textbook that only tangentially addresses management theory and practice. Of course, an agency that uses such materials should expect criticism from some candidates who will say that the texts "don't have anything to say about law enforcement," or that they "are directed toward managers in the private sector." The point is that there is something to be learned from both domains.

Assessment Centers

Written tests can ascertain a candidate's basic knowledge of certain concepts important to your organization, and interviews can be effective in examining both knowledge and some personal characteristics. However, there is no technique more valuable than a well-designed assessment center when it comes to judging how a candidate will perform in a given situation.

A well-designed assessment center will allow the organization an opportunity to actually see how candidates apply

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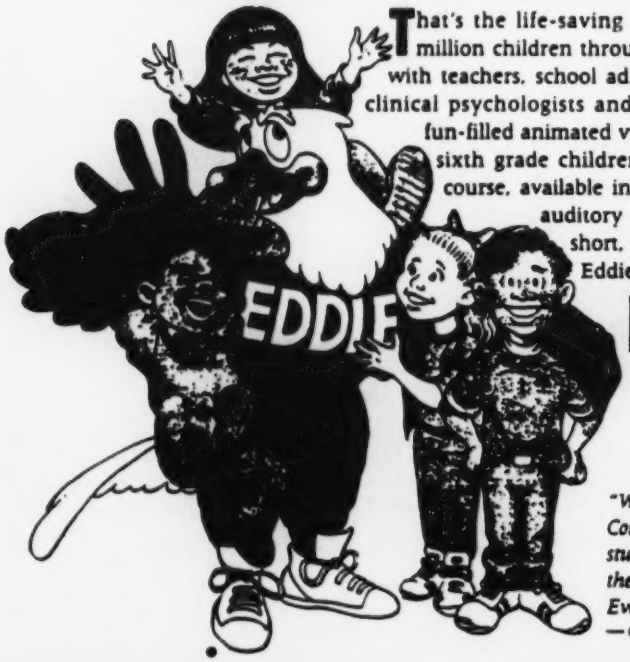

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their experience, knowledge and skills to the solution of real-life problems. While 99 percent of all candidates will say they are participative managers, how many will actually see opportunities to use subordinate participation in decision making? Similarly, while most will be able to recite the organization's mission statement or its definition of community policing, how many will actually see opportunities for its application?

If an organization is in the early stages of implementing community policing, one exercise might simply require that the candidate articulate the benefits—and costs—of community-based policing. Another exercise might be a role play, in which a candidate for a sergeant's position must counsel a recalcitrant officer who has rejected the concept and is an outspoken critic of anyone who attempts to implement the community policing philosophy. When confronted by a veteran officer arguing that "this community policing junk will go away as soon as the chief leaves," an amazing number of candidates allow themselves to be convinced and eventually agree that the best thing to do is lay back and wait for the next "fad" to come along. Such an exercise also identifies those who find it difficult to convince someone else of the value of community policing because they do not believe it themselves. Not only will an appropriately designed assessment center reveal these people, but it will provide feedback to alert both the candidates and the organization that more work is needed to bring people along.

For those police organizations who are much further along in terms of integrating community policing into their organization, a variety of exercises can be designed to reflect the issues and examine the candidates' skills. Role play exercises—particularly subordinate counseling role plays—are quite common in assessment centers, and they are very conducive to testing candidates' views of community policing.

Each of the following role plays consists of candidates viewing a videotape of a situation and then interacting with the subordinate who is seen in the videotape.

In one exercise, the candidates (typically for a lieutenant's or captain's position) are told that they assigned a subordinate (typically a sergeant or lieutenant) to attend a neighborhood association meeting and make a presentation on the department's community policing efforts. The candidates view the subordinate's presentation as if they were standing in the back of the room.

The subordinate begins the presentation by explaining that he is there because the chief said he had to be, and it goes downhill from there. The subordinate was unable to explain community policing or how it would benefit the neighborhood. He lacked effective communication skills, never realized that he had insulted several members of the audience, became defensive when the audience asked questions and otherwise turned a potentially positive encounter into a negative one.

Assessment center exercises must be designed to present real-life problems, offer situations that allow the evaluators to meaningfully evaluate candidates, allow the candidates opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities, and reflect the department's philosophy, goals and mission.

After viewing the tape, the candidates were expected to counsel the subordinate, giving evaluators an opportunity to see if they could explain community policing, teach the subordinate how to make better public presentations, motivate the subordinate, set goals and do all those things that supervisors are supposed to do. This one exercise allows evaluators to assess not only a candidate's knowledge of community policing, but also his interpersonal skills, leadership and supervisory skills, and much more.

In another exercise, used to evaluate candidates for first-line supervisory positions such as sergeant, the candidates view a videotape in which a subordinate officer takes a routine call (e.g., domestic violence, disturbance at a bar, neighbor dispute, etc.). The officer takes some appropriate actions, but also makes numerous errors, including failure to apply the principles of community policing.

The candidates view the tape as if they were at the scene, and then counsel the subordinate regarding their performance. As in the previously described scenario, the evaluators have an excellent opportunity to evaluate the candidates' knowledge, skills and abilities.

A well-designed in-basket exercise presents candidates with a variety of challenging and real-life problems reflecting the organization's philosophical orientation.

One common problem encountered in the in-basket exercise is a situation in which the supervisor is not particularly supportive of the department's philosophy. This lack of support should be signalled subtly, through a variety of indicators that—viewed individually—appear rather insignificant. Taken together, however, these indicators suggest that the supervisor is merely giving lip service to the department's goals and objectives. The candidates' handling of this problem—if they even recognize it—can be quite revealing.

The in-basket exercise also provides opportunities to create situations in which community policing, TQM, problem-oriented policing or other philosophical factors can be applied to the problems presented. This allows the evaluators an opportunity to examine whether candidates know when and how to apply these strategies, as well as which ones to apply.

Other revealing problems for the in-basket are those that seem to lend themselves to "quick-fix" solutions. Candidates' responses will indicate whether they view problems from a narrow or broad perspective, whether they look for long-term results and whether they truly understand the consequences of their decisions.

While the ways in which candidates can be evaluated through assessment center methodology are limited only by imagination and certain physical constraints (such as money), it is vital that the exercises be designed to present real-life problems of the kind that are likely to be faced by an individual in the position; offer situations that allow the evaluators to meaningfully distinguish between and rate candidates' knowledge, skills and abilities; allow the candidates opportunities to demonstrate their experience and capabilities; and reflect the department's philosophy, goals and mission.

Conclusion

Selection and promotional tests can provide a tremendous opportunity to reinforce the department's direction and goals. As candidates prepare for the test, they will be reminded of the important issues facing the department; as they take the test, they will be reminded that the organization supports and values those goals. A well-designed test will result in the selection and promotion of those candidates who are in tune with the department's direction and goals, and who can apply the department's philosophy and values to their everyday work.

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